

The City Council is supposed to provide oversight of the Mayor... so, if the Mayor wants the Fiscal Watchdog out of his way, what doesn't he want you to see? Now we know.

Part 1: newly uncovered Holyoke Fiscal Crisis.

On October 1, the state Division of Local Services blew the lid on the total fiscal mismanagement of the city by the Mayor and Treasurer. The Mayor is now trying to cover his tracks and eliminate anyone who would hold him accountable. The stakes for the city election just grew a hundredfold.

The Finance Committee October 15th was extremely alarming. The Mayor and Treasurer have run our finances completely into the ditch. Now their masterplan for the election is starting to actually make sense. They want their Rubber Stamp 7-6 City Council to sweep it under the rug and consolidate power.

6 Major Alarming Financial Takeaways

- 1. The city has not reconciled our cash accounts for 2023, 2024, and 2025.** Never has the city been this far behind.
- 2. No free cash certified for Fiscal years 2024 and 2025.** Millions of dollars in city funds are being kept from the city because our reconciliations and required paperwork have not been completed. This causes our taxpayers to be overcharged on their taxes because these funds could be used to reduce the current tax levy. It also costs us a massive amount in lost interest dollars these funds would have earned.
- 3. The State has suspended all of our Local Aid payments.** Holyoke receives \$7 million per month in Local Aid and those dollars have been shut off again. This happened in FY 2024, and then in FY 2025. In an unprecedented move, the state immediately since July 1, shut off our local aid funds. This destroys our city's cash flow. How is the city supposed to pay its bills with no state aid? Even if and when we recoup these funds, we are losing massive amounts of money in lost interest on these dollars that we could be using to help our city.
- 4. Massive tax increases.** The Mayor has completely mismanaged the budget which is why I have not been able to support his budget. To fund his exorbitant spending and mismanagement, he has raised the tax levy 19% during his 4 years as Mayor. He has raised tax levy by \$11 million per year on Holyoke residents with the help of his Rubber Stamp 7-6 majority on the Council -- which is more than the city raised taxes in the prior 10 years. No wonder why residents are complaining about the unprecedented level of tax increases they have seen in recent years when they

themselves are facing unprecedented inflation and are hurting. An \$11 million a year tax increase on Holyokers while also receiving \$39 million in federal ARPA funding support is gouging our residents.

5. Nepotism hiring. The Mayor will blame the “Structure” of the government for the train wreck that is unfolding, when really it is as a result of the incompetence of the Mayor and Treasurer to manage the budget and finances. In 2022 when the Mayor and Council President Tessa Murphy Romboletti orchestrated the hiring of the current Treasurer, who is their personal friend, I predicted this would be a huge financial mistake. It turned out to be much worse than even I predicted. The Treasurer -- who has no college degree, and no finance experience -- was selected over the candidate I supported who was a CPA with decades of senior finance experience strictly because of cronyism. If the Mayor and his Rubber Stamp Council supporters were so concerned about weaknesses in the “Structure” then why would you hire someone so clearly incompetent to oversee it.

Meanwhile while the city is paying the Treasurer \$90,000 per year, the city has been forced to pay nearly a half a million in consulting fees that have so far proven ineffective to assist him. They tried to waste another nearly \$600,000 in consulting fees but I was able to help stop that when they could not prove the effectiveness of the first \$350,000 including reconciliations that were supposed to have been done that we are now finding out were not done.

6. Lost Bond Rating. Now it has been reported that the city has lost its bond rating since June 2024 and it has not been restored. Transparency anyone? Where was the press release on this? Holyoke has tens of millions in bonds coming up and it will be hard to manage those if we have no bond rating. The reporting agencies will not rate us because there are no audited financials for 2023, 2024, or 2025. Our outside auditors cannot do their work because of all the problems cited earlier. This is as bad as it gets and it needs to be fixed asap.

It is true that there have been some issues in the Treasurer’s office for years before the current Treasurer arrived, but how could any responsible Mayor turn the keys over to someone who has zero experience or education because of nepotism? That irresponsible decision has now lead to our finances being completely led off the cliff. Meanwhile, the people who helped run this into the ditch are trying to consolidate more power onto themselves with a mayoral appointed super powerful CAFO (a de facto city manager - so why are we going to still keep paying the Mayor \$100,000?) while disempowering our City Auditor, watering down our council voting and ethics

rules (such as putting supporters into city jobs then onto the city council at the same time) and taking out any City Councilor who does not go along with their plan.

Part 2: The Action Plan to right the ship

1. We need to elect Independent Competent City Councilors on November 4th who will put the residents' interests over their personal friendships. We should work with the Mayor but not be in his back pocket.
2. We need to immediately approve the appointed Treasurer ordinance that supports the state law that voters approved nearly a year ago that has been buried in committee by the Rubber Stamp majority.
3. We need to hire a highly qualified competent Treasurer by February 2026 and get real results. In the meantime, I will support additional consulting services to assist the Mayor and Treasurer to comply with State requirements but they need to use them wisely.
4. We should take up the State on their proposal to hire a firm to complete the required reconciliations. I like the idea that the State retain a firm they are confident in, and is independent of the Mayor and Treasurer and really opens the books and gets the job done. We need complete transparency which is sorely lacking now. Holyoke has paid for outside consultants before only to find out required work was not completed. Moreover, under state law, the state can collect all the information it needs that is in the public interest to report to citizens on Holyoke's finances.

It is very telling that the Mayor is also using scare tactics to say we should do it ourselves instead of using the independent state firm because it will put us on the "path to receivership". That is not true, the State does not want to run the city but it does want us to get our house in order and is sick of his excuses for the last 4 years. These scare tactics are just like other recent conspiracy theories the Mayor peddles against City Councilors he does not like or who question him. I have a simple question: what is he afraid independent reviewers would find out?

I am thankful that the State has turned lights on what the Mayor and Treasurer have been up to. Lucky for him he is unopposed in the November 4th election. No wonder he also stopped the voters from being allowed to vote on recalling four year elected officials. The Council passed it and he has refused to allow the people to vote on it on November 4th because he said he's not signing until he "gets what he wants."

He knows the only way to stop any check on his absolute power is to get a 2/3 majority on the City Council, and he is on an unprecedented negative attack campaign

against anyone who stands in his way. If the Mayor is successful in getting a fully Rubber Stamp Council then a critical safeguard to protect the people's money will have been eliminated.

Friends, as we draw closer to Election Day on November 4, I'm asking you to join with me in ignoring the hateful smears, the misinformation, and the shenanigans being directed against my campaign and other like-minded candidates. Sadly, these tactics are increasingly being deployed right out of City Hall itself.

They know my experience as "Holyoke's Fiscal Watchdog" and an advocate for taxpayers and government accountability. They know I'm standing in their way, blocking them from complete control to do whatever they want, whenever they want.

You've seen my track record. I helped block with the support of 65% of Holyoke voters the biggest tax increase in our city's history and made sure we built Peck Middle School with no tax override. I fought to let the public vote on a CPA tax cut when the mayor vetoed it and 66% of voters approved it. I blocked the City Council from jacking up their own and the Mayor's salary by 30-40%. I stopped the Mayor from wasting hundreds of thousands in inappropriate legal settlements. I stopped his foolhardy plan to overpay \$700,000+ on a new school department office. I also stand in the way against his plan to destroy Elmwood Forest that is being pushed by one of his mega-donors. Now, I am reporting on the treasury situation.

The other side can call it "obstruction" or whatever else they want. I have supported the mayor whenever I can such as implementing Shot Spotter, infrastructure improvements such as repaving streets like High Street, school renovation projects, implementing a financial policy manual or building Peck Middle School without a tax increase. But I am not afraid to hold him accountable too because that is my job which I do for long hours for little money as a civic service to our city. I've spent the better part of the past thirty years standing up for you and I plan to continue doing it each and every day if re-elected. I want what's best for you and your family, and I am not about to be distracted or intimidated by their dirty politics.

Thank you for your support and please vote on November 4th.